DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 087 984 CG 008 728

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TITLE Relationship of Masculinity-Femininity to Dependency and Self-Esteem.
INSTITUTION Michigan Univ., Ann Arbor. Dept. of Psychology.
REPORT NO R-14
PUB DATE Oct 72
NOTE 16p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50
DESCRIPTORS *Elementary School Students; *Personality Assessment; Psychological Characteristics; Research Projects; *Self Concept Tests; *Self Esteem; *Sex Differences
IDENTIFIERS *Franck Drawing Completion Test

ABSTRACT

Unconscious masculinity-femininity, dependency and self-esteem were respectively measured, in two group-testing sessions per child, by the short form of the Franck Drawing Completion Test, the Group Personality Projective Test, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Subjects were 122 sixth and seventh grade white working-class boys and girls from an industrial midwestern city. Analyses for sex, grade, and school differences reveal a significant sex difference between Franck scores (which was expected) and a significant difference in self-esteem scores between the two schools, (which was unexpected). Relationships among dependency, self-esteem, and masculinity-femininity differed between sexes. For girls, there were usually low positive correlations. For boys, the relationship between self-esteem and dependency was in the hypothesized negative direction; unconscious masculinity was not related to dependency, and related to self-esteem either minimally or opposite to expectations. (Author)

ED 087984

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Report # 14, Developmental Program, Department of Psychology

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104, October, 1972

CG 008 728

RELATIONSHIP OF MASCULINITY-FEMININITY TO DEPENDENCY AND SELF-ESTEEM[1]

Mary Morris Kameya and Lorraine Nadelman

Each of the three variables in the title has generated impressively large bodies of theoretical and research literature over the recent decades. The present lack appears to be in systematic research of the relationships among these variables, in boys and girls, of different ages, and different social classes, in different settings.

Despite some weakening of stereotyped sex-role attitudes, there is strong agreement in American society that certain types of behavior are masculine and others are feminine. This consensus applies to the trait of dependency, generally classified as feminine (Kagan and Moss, 1960, 1962). In a longitudinal study of normal development, passive and dependent behavior was generally a stable personality trait from ages six to ten through early adulthood for females, but not for males.

Dependency has been found to be related to lower need for achievement in nursery children (Crandall, Preston, and Robson, 1960), and to lower self-esteem in college students (McCandless, 1967). High and low self-esteem, in turn, have been correlated with many positive and negative traits, respectively (Coopersmith, 1967; Lekarczyk and Hill, 1969; Maw and Maw, 1970). However, there appear to be sex differences in these patterns of relationships. For example, high self-esteem is positively related to performance in boys but not in girls (Lekarczyk and Hill, 1969); boys low in self-esteem are more likely to change their answers to opinion items after hearing group norms for responses, but girls' opinion changes relate to level of sex-identification rather than to self-esteem (Eagly, 1969).

The present study investigated the relationships among masculine and feminine attitudes, level of self-esteem, and dependency needs, in preadolescent working-class children. From the information available at the time of data-collection, the following hypotheses were made concerning preadolescent working class boys, tested in a school setting: 1) masculinity in working class boys is inversely related to dependency; 2) masculinity in working class boys is positively related to self-esteem; 3) dependency and self-esteem in working class boys are inversely related.

Previous studies by Brown (1956; 1957) and Hartley (1959) have indicated that in our society there is less pressure for girls to learn and use only feminine behaviors and attitudes than there is for boys to learn and use only masculine behaviors and attitudes. Therefore, it is probable that the relationships among masculinity-femininity, dependency, and self-esteem are more ambiguous for girls. Since the few studies of these traits in preadolescent girls have not revealed systematic relationships, no specific hypotheses for them were made at this time.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 122 sixth and seventh grade white children from an industrial city bordering Detroit, and attended two neighboring schools. They were approximately equally divided by sex. For all subjects both natural parents were living in the home; parents were native-born Americans; neither had had college training; and almost all were of the working class. English was the native language for each subject. None of the subjects was known to have been receiving psychiatric care, and none was a severe behavior problem in school.

Instruments

A short form of the Franck Drawing Completion Test as used by Lipsitt and Strodtbeck (1967), which compares males' and females' expressive styles in

finishing abstract drawings, was used to measure masculinity-femininity. It consisted of 11 partial abstract drawings which each subject completed as he wished. This test was used because it seems to provide a less culturally biased or obvious measure of masculinity-femininity than do most other instruments.

Level of dependence was determined by two scores, succorance and nurturance, from the Group Personality Projective Test developed by Cassel and Kahn (1961). This test is composed of 90 stick figure drawings for each of which the subject chooses one of five suggested interpretations. A high level of dependence was shown by a high score for succorance which is defined as "a need to seek aid and play an infant role" (Cassel and Kahn, 1961, p. 40). A high score for nurturance indicates "a need to play a father role, including volunteering and giving aid to others."

Self-esteem was measured on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965), 12 statements reflecting high or low self-esteem which the subject rates from one to five as more or less applicable to him. Thus, scores may range from 12 to 60 points.

Administration

The tests were administered separately to each of eight classes, four sixth and four seventh grades. Two sessions of about an hour and fifteen minutes each were required to complete the battery. All children in a class were tested and materials of those who did not meet criteria were discarded. All tests were administered by the senior author (white young woman).

Results and Discussion

Some of the results appear in the accompanying material, Tables 1 and 2 and Figure 1. Results will first be discussed in terms of the hypotheses.

Hypothesis I

It was predicted that masculinity in boys would be inversely related to dependency. Since a low score on the Franck is more masculine and a high score more feminine, a positive correlation between the Franck and succorance scores would support the hypothesis. The data showed low positive correlations for all groups of boys. Although the correlations were in the expected direction, the hypothesis was not confirmed at the desired level of significance.

It is possible that data from a measure of conscious attitudes (such as the California Psychological Inventory) might have given very different results. Dependency has been shown to be a trait which is minimally stable between childhood and adulthood for males (Kagan and Moss, 1960), and it seems probable that this shift is due to boys' attempts to meet societal expectations. Therefore, it would seem that scores from the femininity scale of the CPI which measures overt attitudes and beliefs might have shown a stronger negative relationship between masculinity and dependency than did the Franck.

Hypothesis II

It was predicted that level of masculinity in boys would be positively related to self-esteem. That is, boys scoring more masculine (lower on the Franck test) would be higher in self-esteem and boys scoring more feminine would be lower in self-esteem. However, for all boys there was a low positive correlation ($r = .17$) between Franck score and self-esteem which was caused by positive correlations of .45 ($p = < .05$) for seventh grade boys and .35 ($p = < .10$) for School I boys; there was virtually no relationship between sex-identification and self-esteem for sixth grade boys or for School II boys. It must be concluded not only that the data do not support the hypothesis of more masculine Franck

scores being associated with higher self-esteem but also that the results suggest the possibility of a different pattern. However, Connell and Johnson (1970) did find that adolescent males having high sex-role identification (measured on the femininity scale of the California Psychological Inventory) were higher in self-esteem than those having low sex-role identification ($p = < .01$). Again, it appears that a projective measure like the Franck certainly does tap something other than that tapped by inventories.

Hypothesis III

It was predicted that there would be a negative relationship between dependency and self-esteem in boys. In this case, the data did support the hypothesis although not all correlations were statistically significant. There were negative correlations between succorance need scores and self-esteem of -.27 ($p = < .05$) for all boys, -.36 ($p = < .05$) for sixth grade boys, and -.35 ($p = < .10$ for School II boys.

These results are in accord with those reported by McCandless (1967), of a relation between affiliative dependency and low self-esteem in males. Moreover, Kagan and Moss (1962) showed that dependent behavior found in young boys usually drops out by young adulthood. In this society, being masculine has traditionally been associated with being independent, and it seems that in trying to achieve masculinity the young boy attempts to repress dependency needs. Those who do remain highly dependent tend to have lower self-esteem.

Findings for Girls

For all 64 girls, there were correlations of .21 ($p = < .10$) between femininity (Franck scores) and self-esteem and .21 ($p = < .10$) between

dependency and self-esteem. These positive correlations, although low, fit the traditional attitudes about the feminine role. It should be noted, however, that while feminine and/or dependent girls could have high self-esteem, it was also possible for some less feminine and less dependent girls to have high self-esteem. There were several interesting differences between girls from the two schools. As can be seen in Table 2, there is a significant sex x grade x school interaction on the Franck. The mean Franck score rose from grade six to seven in School I girls and dropped from grade six to seven in School II girls. The relationship between femininity and dependency also showed school differences for girls. For School I girls, there was a correlation of +.23 between femininity and dependence while for School II girls there was a correlation of -.31 ($p = < .10$) between these two variables. It seems that the girls in these two schools conceive of femininity in different ways. Although it was expected that the results for girls would be more variable than those for boys, it was not expected that the girls from the two schools would differ so dramatically.

From the information collected prior to testing it was believed that the sample families from the two schools were homogeneous with regard to socio-economic status and education of parents, and that the neighborhoods which were a few blocks apart were similar. However, there are evidently some important differences in the backgrounds of the two schools. In addition to the different pattern of correlations of the Franck with other scores and the significant difference in self-esteem between the two groups of girls, there was also a gap of almost one point between Franck scores (School I = 6.00; School II = 6.97). Although at this time it is only possible to conjecture the reasons for these differences,

the following observations may be relevant. School I was immediately behind what appeared to be the old downtown section of the city while School II was next to a large city park. School I, which was in good condition, was approximately 20 years old, but School II had a large new addition which covered the older portion of the school and gave it a light, clean appearance. It seemed that the neighborhood area around School II was somewhat better maintained than that around School I. Therefore, it may have been that the total family population which School II served may have been slightly more upwardly mobile and may have been of higher social standing.

Other Results Worth Noting

A significant difference was obtained between the Franck scores of all boys (5.41) and all girls (6.45) ($F = 7.83$; df-1/114; $p = < .01$). Most of the significant sex differences on the Franck are with older groups.

Subjects in School II had significantly higher self-esteem than those in School I. Some of the possible reasons for this difference in self-esteem between schools may be found in the discussion of findings for girls.

Within each school there was virtually no difference between mean scores for self-esteem in boys and girls. This finding is particularly interesting considering the highly significant difference between self-esteem in the two schools. The similarity between boys' and girls' self-esteem scores is not in accord with the work of Carpenter and Busse (1969), who did find a sex difference with girls having lower self-esteem. In our sample, boys consistently showed more variability in their self-esteem scores than the girls despite the similarity in mean scores between sexes.

For the total sample, there were consistent negative, and usually significant relationships between need to nurture and need to be succorred. Correlations ranged from -.12 to -.54, with almost all between -.20 and -.45. This finding does not support Hartup and Keller (1960) who found that "seeking help" may be positively associated with need to nurture in nursery school children. In addition to large age differences between their and our samples, our measures also differed. Our measure of nurturance from the Group Personality Projective Test seems to have had many masculinely oriented items and was, in fact, defined by the test constructors as a "need to play the father role."

It is noteworthy that the mean succorance score for all subjects was 12.55, which is significantly higher ($p = < .001$) than Cassel and Kahn's (1961) mean of 8.00 for unselected normals of both sexes. The mean for the group used in this study was much closer to that which Cassel and Kahn found for a group of Spanish-Americans (12.00). They also obtained a high need for succorance score (11.00) from delinquent or imprisoned individuals of both sexes. According to these authors (1961, p. 24) the "personality needs and tensions of any individual are continuously changing, and what is true at a given time or for a specific situation may not necessarily be true at another time or for a different situation." The fathers of the children in our sample were for the most part laborers in the steel and automobile factories in and around the city. At the time of testing, layoffs had begun and were increasing. This factor, and the resulting uncertainty it produced in the lives of the children, may have had some effect in producing the exceptionally high succorance scores obtained by the children.

It is important to note that the main correlations among masculinity-femininity, self-esteem, and dependency were low, even when significant

(r's ranged from -.35 to +.35), and should not be used to make predictions for individual cases.

Possibilities for Future Research

The Franck test which we used as a measure of sex-identity yielded results which were different from those obtained from other instruments in other studies. Since those other instruments generally measured masculinity-femininity (m-f) by self-reporting of certain attitudes and behavior patterns, they may be said to measure "conscious" m-f. Hence, it would be useful to test individuals for both "conscious" and "unconscious" (i.e., more subtle) m-f and to classify them by scores on both dimensions when making comparisons between groups.

In addition to differences between "conscious" and "unconscious" m-f, differences in levels of m-f may reflect situational or ecological factors. It would be interesting to compare the present results which were obtained in the classroom with those obtained in a typically masculine situation such as a boys' club, locker room, or shop class, or in a feminine situation such as a girls' club or homemaking class. It may be that despite efforts to change the traditionally feminine atmosphere of elementary schools, many children still think of school and schoolwork as feminine. Moreover, this attitude may be more typical of some groups in society than of others. Using the same measures on the same groups of children in two very different situations would help to answer some of the questions raised by these results.

In summary, then, we found that femininity, dependency, and high self-esteem can be congruent for girls. For boys, the relationship between self-esteem and dependency was in the expected negative direction; unconscious masculinity was not related to dependency, and related to self-esteem either minimally or opposite to expectations.

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Footnote

This paper, in modified form, was presented at the biennial meetings of the Society for Research in Child Development, April 1-4, 1971, Minneapolis. We wish to thank the principal, staff, and children of Ann Visger and Dunn Schools in River Rouge for their cooperation. Dr. Barbara Newman acted as second reader for the extended version, which fulfilled the 619 research requirement for the senior author.

Table 1

Measures of Central Tendency and Variability for
Masculinity-Femininity, Dependence, and Self-Esteem Tests

Group	Test Measures							
	Franck		Nurturance		Succorance		Self-Esteem	
	mean	s.d.	mean	s.d.	mean	s.d.	mean	s.d.
Sixth grade								
boys	5.35	1.69	9.74	2.66	12.56	4.52	45.24	8.38
girls	6.56	2.26	9.44	3.12	12.38	4.16	46.00	6.14
both	5.94	2.06	9.59	2.87	12.47	4.32	45.61	7.33
Seventh grade								
boys	5.50	1.56	10.17	3.78	12.17	3.90	47.79	7.82
girls	6.34	2.04	9.31	2.40	13.00	4.91	45.94	5.53
both	5.98	1.88	9.68	3.07	12.64	4.49	46.73	6.61
Sixth and seventh grade								
boys	5.41	1.62	9.91	3.15	12.40	4.29	46.29	8.18
girls	6.45	2.14	9.38	2.76	12.69	4.52	45.97	5.80
both	5.96	1.97	9.63	2.95	12.55	4.38	46.12	7.00
School I	5.73	1.94	9.63	2.97	12.92	4.46	43.89	6.74
School II	6.20	2.00	9.63	2.95	12.15	4.28	48.51	6.52
School I								
boys	5.41	1.80	9.83	3.41	12.90	4.72	44.00	8.17
girls	6.00	2.03	9.47	2.58	12.94	4.31	43.79	5.35
School II								
boys	5.41	1.45	10.00	2.92	11.90	3.72	48.59	7.65
girls	6.97	2.17	9.27	2.99	12.40	4.81	48.43	5.34

Table 2

2 x 2 x 2 Analysis of Variance for

Franck, Succorance, and Self-Esteem

Source of Variation	df	Franck		Succorance		Self-Esteem	
		Mean Sq.	F	Mean Sq.	F	Mean Sq.	F
Sex	1	26.56	7.83**	2.83	0.14	5.78	0.13
Grade	1	0.12	0.35	0.37	0.19	106.29	2.36
School	1	6.95	2.05	20.56	1.03	694.99	15.45***
Sex x Grade	1	0.91	0.27	8.59	0.43	54.72	1.21
Sex x School	1	5.76	1.70	3.64	0.18	0.76	0.17
Grade x School	1	13.98	4.12*	18.27	0.92	0.16	0.35
Sex x Grade x School	1	19.64	5.79*	0.66	0.33	0.40	0.90
Error	114	3.39		19.89		44.99	

*** = .001 level

** = .01 level

* = .05 level

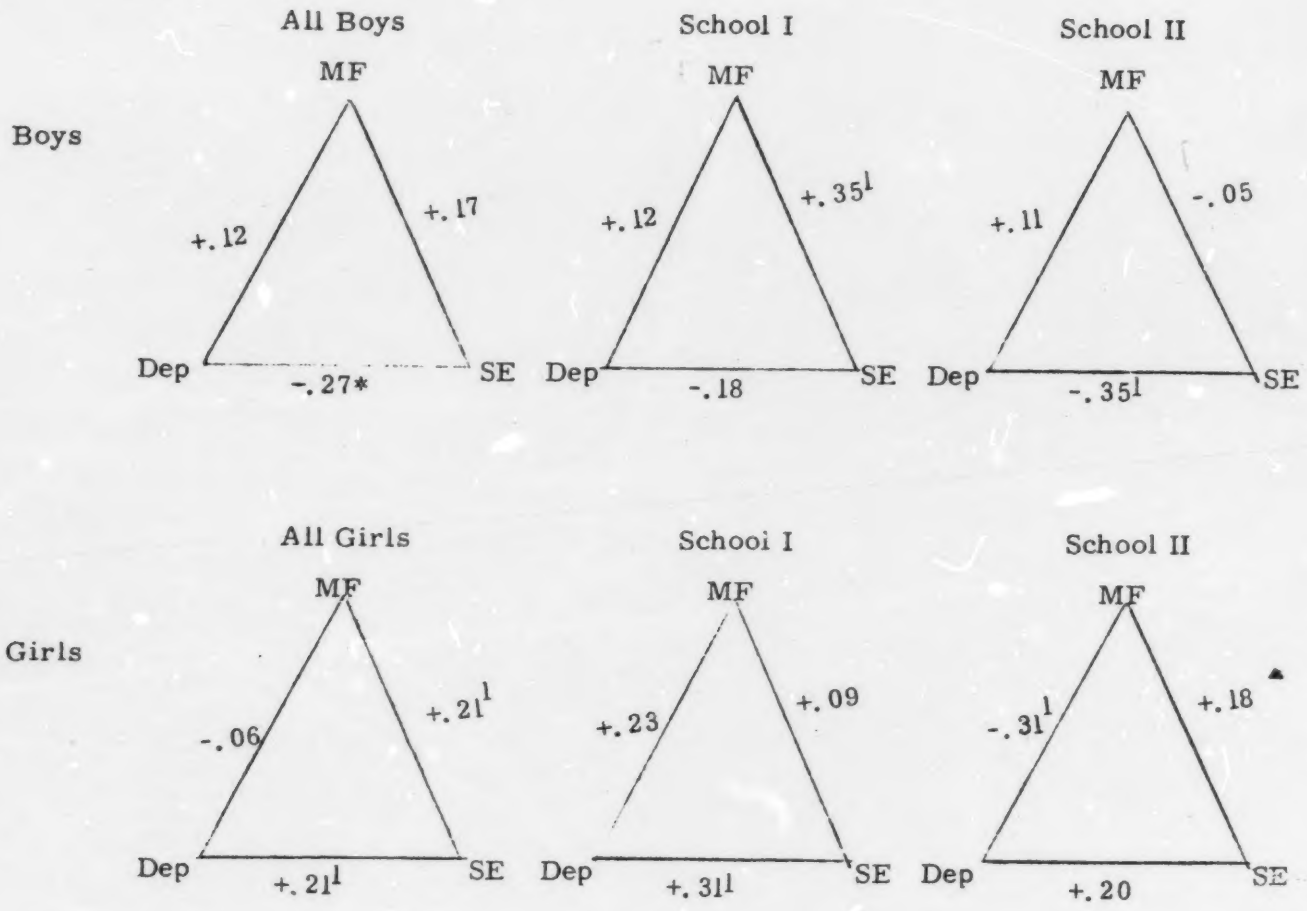

Figure I. Relationships among Masculinity-Femininity, Dependency, and Self Esteem

** = .01 level of confidence

* = .05 level of confidence

1 = .10 level of confidence